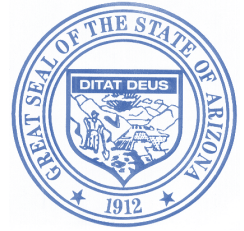




# Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Services



## Communities & Crime Prevention

In 1996 Maricopa County and the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County were faced with overcrowded conditions in the juvenile detention centers and a projected 30% growth in the juvenile population over the next ten years. In addition to exploring more traditional ways of responding to these conditions, they jointly began to explore alternatives to detention and actions that would reduce the need for Juvenile Court action. One of the significant actions they took was to make an **investment in juvenile crime prevention**.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors now makes an investment of \$442,000 per year in the areas with the highest number of referrals to the Juvenile Court and in schools with the highest truancy rates. These dollars support neighborhood crime prevention and truancy prevention programs whose sole objective(s) is to reduce juvenile crime and referrals to the Juvenile Court or to increase school attendance. As a result, the criteria for funding juvenile crime prevention programs is that the providers must be local non-profit organizations, schools, or neighborhood groups **located within the targeted zip code areas**. And, the providers must be a **collaboration** of two or more local groups of non-profit organizations, schools, and/or neighborhood groups. The truancy prevention projects provide funding directly to schools and/or school districts.

The role of the Juvenile Probation Department in this project is to support, provide information, and to evaluate the outcomes. Prior to funding any projects, the department provides information about the referrals that are being received by the Court in each of the zip code areas and schools. Demographic information, juvenile profiles, and offense patterns are provided in a “user friendly” format. In addition, the department gathers information on the promising practices in preventing crime and truancy in communities throughout the country. All of this information is provided in the request for proposals that are distributed to potential providers.

## Types of Programs Currently Funded:



**Wake Up Program:** “Wake Up!” c.e.a.s. Violence is a unique youth prevention program developed in the City of Phoenix Schools for seventh and eighth grade students. Police officers work with groups of children in neighborhood schools to not only provide awareness to these students that they have choices and that bad choices have consequences but also to provide recognition and rewarding experiences for positive behavior. The clubs meet after school weekly and one Saturday per month. The weekend activities focus on community service and development of new awareness/alternative activities. The programming is based on research by Hawkins and Catalano (1985) and is intended to assist students in building resiliency.



**After School Programs:** Several projects provide before and after school programming for children and youth. These programs may involve any combination of mentoring; reading enrichment; support groups; athletic, field trip and club affiliation opportunities. The before and after school programs focus on fun and asset building.



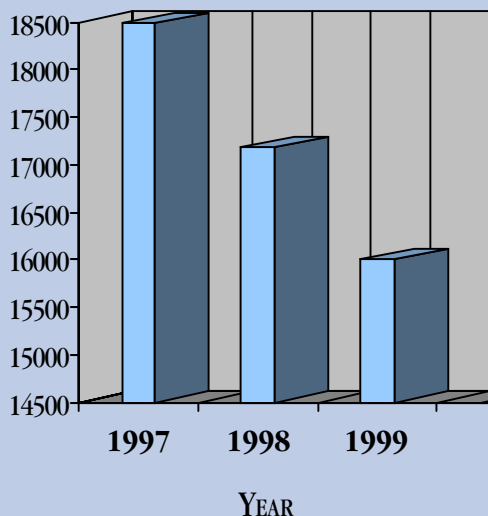
**Special Projects:** Special projects that have been funded utilize the arts, specifically drama, to assist youth in developing decision-making skills, in working together as a team, in accepting personal responsibility, in practicing positive peer interaction, and in expressing creativity. Other projects celebrate diversity within the community, focus on raising self-esteem and team building, and provide peer mentoring and mediation. One project provides a community organizer for a school district to work toward creating and strengthening the ties between the schools, community, and businesses in the area. These ties have resulted in school-neighborhood-business partnerships that then create youth programs and activities, which have resulted in reduced crime and violence in the schools and in the community.



***Truancy Prevention:*** Schools have identified many different ways to prevent and to reduce truancy in their schools. They have built upon the foundation of other programs to further reduce truancy and tardiness. In some this means hiring an attendance clerk; in others it is education and awareness groups for parents; some teach critical thinking and life management skills in age appropriate ways to students. There are “Dream Teams,” “STARS,” and the “GO! Project”.

## Results:

COMPLAINTS IN TOP 20 ZIP CODES



In February 1999 Maricopa County's Office of Management and Budget released a research report of the early results of the county's investment in crime prevention. The results were, at the very least, promising. During the first year of operation, the sixteen projects that were initially funded served 5,124 juveniles, of which 3,496 were considered at-risk youth for referral to the Juvenile Court. The total number of referrals to the Juvenile Court decreased by 8.47% in the twenty targeted zip codes. Based on this decrease, the OMB estimated that the number of juveniles diverted could result in **a long-term cost avoidance of \$6,774,935**. The second year, referrals had decreased by 12% overall.

*“Crime prevention is the promotion of those attitudes, activities, and behaviors that create and maintain safe and vital communities where crime and delinquency cannot flourish.”*

From the American Probation and Parole Association “Position Statement on Prevention”

## Policy Implications

- ◆ Probation Departments can be a source of information to the community to aid them in their crime prevention efforts.
- ◆ Investments and partnerships in crime prevention are new roles for Probation Departments.
- ◆ Crime prevention is the best way to insure public safety.

### For more information contact:

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